

**Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee
on Governor's proposed Midterm Budget adjustments FY 2017
IN OPPOSITION
H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE
EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017
Re: Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) Budget
February 18, 2016**

**TESTIMONY OF AMANDA SAGE
Monroe, CT**

Good evening, Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is Amanda Sage and I am from Monroe. I am here today to address House Bill No. 5044, "An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2017, Regarding the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Budget."

Growing up I seemed to have everything going for me. I did well in school, I was a swimmer and loved my teammates. I did have some issues with depression in my teenage years, but it was nothing compared to what started just a few years later. After I graduated high school, I went to college with hopes of becoming a nurse. By November of my freshman year in college my life consisted of survival. I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder in 2010. I lost my ability to function. All I could do was find a way to survive each day. I was hospitalized twice and in 2012 I failed out of nursing school.

In 2013 I moved back in with my parents. I went in and out of the hospital and some outpatient programs. Then my treatment coordinator at the program I was in at the time suggested that I start going to Bridge House in Bridgeport. I started there in June of 2013. Starting there was the best decision I've ever made. In August of 2013 I had my last of my 6 hospitalizations. With the support of Bridge House I eventually was ready to apply for jobs. The first job I got was not a success. I was devastated but Bridge House helped me get back up on my feet and get my next job as a cashier at CVS. With Bridge House's support I was able to keep that job, get a 2nd job at Stop and Shop, and at the same time get my

pharmacy technician license. I now work at that same CVS almost two years later as a full-time pharmacy technician.

Bridge house is funded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Without the funding that Bridge House gets, they would not exist. And if Bridge House didn't exist, all that would be left of me today is a memory and a gravestone. I know you have to make hard decisions every day—but know that the money you spend really does save people and enables them to rebuild their lives and chase their dreams. As for me, I can genuinely say that I've never been happier, and I have *never* had this full of a life. You have the power to change many lives like mine by ensuring that support programs like Bridge House remain funded and are therefore able to do what they do best, recover lives.

Thank you for your time.